



Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies for Secondary English Learner Students



Research provides insight on specific instructional strategies that support English learner students in secondary grades with English language development and acquisition of academic content knowledge. This infographic supports secondary teachers in implementing effective evidence-based English language development and content-area instruction for English learner students.

Integrating academic English and content-area instruction

1. Provide learning opportunities in every lesson that include reading, writing, listening, and speaking domains to help English learner students make meaning of both the content and language.^{1, 3, 4, 5}
2. Use deliberate and appropriate scaffolds, such as short videos, visuals, and graphic organizers, to make rigorous, grade-level appropriate, standards-aligned instruction accessible.^{2, 4, 6, 7, 8}
3. Explicitly teach academic skills such as dictionary use, note-taking, pre-reading textbook chapters, and use of vocabulary study cards.³
4. Use multiple information sources (e.g., reports, songs, newspapers, pictures, manuals, videos, narratives, blogs) to make meaning of content.^{2, 6}
5. Teach language features (words, sentences, discourse) in the context of content rather than in isolation.^{3, 4}
6. Provide explicit and culturally relevant instruction.^{2, 4, 5, 6}
7. Utilize English learner students' home language(s) and cognates to develop understanding of new or difficult concepts.^{5, 6}



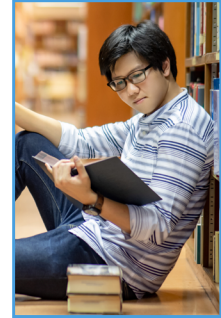
Improving writing skills

1. Deliver regular structured opportunities to develop written language skills.^{1, 7, 9}
2. Teach metacognitive strategies that experienced writers use to express themselves in writing explicitly.^{1, 5}
3. Provide writing assignments anchored in content and focused on developing academic language and writing skills.⁷
4. Create frequent opportunities for students to use written language to explain their reasoning, make inferences, justify their conclusions, and argue their perspective.^{2, 5}



Developing reading skills

1. Use English learner students' home language(s), background knowledge, and future career interests to motivate and engage them in literacy learning.^{1, 5}
2. Connect reading materials to English learner students' cultural background knowledge and content background knowledge.⁵
3. Teach reading in both English and the student's home language.⁵
4. Provide explicit reading comprehension strategies such as questioning, making inferences, monitoring, summarizing, visualizing, and identifying main ideas.⁶



Delivering vocabulary instruction

1. Teach commonly used words (Tier 1) and high-frequency words used across content areas (Tier 2) through explicit word study to build a base for the acquisition of low-frequency content-specific words (Tier 3).^{3, 6, 7, 8}
2. Pre-teach a small set of academic vocabulary needed to understand the basic concepts in the lesson or unit.^{3, 7, 8}
3. Introduce and use vocabulary words frequently and in multiple contexts through writing, speaking, and listening activities.^{5, 7, 8, 9}
4. Encourage students to explore multiple meanings of words and nuances in word meanings.⁹



Expanding oral English use

1. Demonstrate strong oral language models for English learner students to follow.⁵
2. Create daily opportunities for English learner students to communicate in English with teachers and English-speaking peers.^{5, 7, 8, 9}
3. Provide learning opportunities that allow students to discuss meanings and interpretations of texts, work with peers to solve problems, develop explanations or justifications, or express their thinking.^{1, 4, 6, 9}



Providing small group instruction for students struggling with English language or literacy development

1. Provide intensive English language development instruction to newcomers.¹
2. Offer rigorous, intensive support on how language works in texts for long-term English learners who are proficient in spoken English but not yet proficient in academic English.¹
3. Provide instruction for students who struggle with foundational reading skills, including vocabulary development and listening and reading comprehension strategies.⁷
4. Design small group instruction that is targeted to students' identified needs, utilizing assessment data, English proficiency levels, cultural background knowledge, and prior schooling experiences to extend learning opportunities.^{2, 5, 7}



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- 3 Anstrom, K., DiCerbo, P., Butler, F., Katz, A., Millet, J., & Rivera, C. (2010). *A Review of the Literature on Academic English: Implications for K-12 English Language Learners*. The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education.
- 4 Neri, R., Lozano, M., Chang, S., & Herman, J. (2016). *High-Leverage Principles of Effective Instruction for English Learners*. The Regents of the University of California.
- 5 Li, J. (2012). *Principles of Effective English Language Learner Pedagogy*. The College Board.
- 6 Turkan, S., Bicknell, J., & Croft, A. (2012). *Effective Practices for Developing Literacy Skills of English Language Learners in the English Language Arts Classroom*. Educational Testing Service.
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- 8 Hovey, K.A., Miller, R.D., Kiru, E.W., Gerzel-Short, L., Wei, Y., & Kelly, J. (2019). What's a middle school teacher to do? Five evidence-based practices to support English learners and students with learning disabilities. *Preventing School Failure*, 63(3), 220-226.
- 9 Hall, C., Roberts, G.J., Cho, E., McCulley, L.V., Carroll, M., & Vaughn, S. (2017). Reading Instruction for English Learners in the Middle Grades: A Meta-Analysis. *Education Psychology Review*, 29, 763-794.